

Adopted: March 7, 1995

**ACADEMIC SENATE
OF
CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY
San Luis Obispo, California**

**AS-434-95
RESOLUTION ON
PROPOSAL FOR A UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM**

RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate of Cal Poly approve the attached "Proposal for a University Honors Program" and, be it further

RESOLVED: That the attached "Proposal for a University Honors Program" be forwarded to President Baker and Vice President Koob for approval and implementation.

Proposed by: Ad Hoc Committee to Study a University
Honors Program

Date: January 31, 1995

Proposal for a
University Honors Program

The following proposal for a University Honors Program developed from the work of an ad hoc committee¹ appointed beginning spring quarter 1992 by Vice President Koob to consider establishing an honors program at Cal Poly. After reviewing the major literature relevant to honors programs, the committee met regularly to design a program which would fit the needs of students and faculty within the terms of Cal Poly's Strategic Plan.

Description

Objectives

A University Honors Program will provide intellectually challenging opportunities for bright and motivated undergraduate students to enrich and broaden their academic experiences. In addition, Honors courses will stimulate promising students to develop their abilities as fully as possible, encouraging them to develop high intellectual standards, independent thought, logical analysis, and insight into the nature of knowledge.

The Honors Program is additionally designed to help Cal Poly attract and retain diverse and talented students. This core of students will, in turn, contribute to the learning climate at Cal Poly. Faculty will have the opportunity to work with these students in a pedagogically creative environment encouraging close faculty-student interaction. The program will also provide an alternative to current GE&B requirements, setting an example of academic excellence and providing an opportunity for curricular experimentation which, when successful, can be incorporated into the broader GE&B curriculum.

Students in the University Honors Program will elect Honors sections of General Education and Breadth courses as freshmen and sophomores, and participate in Honors Colloquia as juniors and seniors. The program, designed primarily at its inception for entering freshmen, will provide a coherent program of instruction for its students. Once initiated, the program will make efforts to accommodate transfer students.

¹The committee included Linda Dalton (City & Regional Planning), Gary Field (Graphic Communication), Ed Garner (Mechanical Engineering), George Lewis (Mathematics), Ed Mayo (History), Diane Michelfelder (Philosophy), Walt Perlick (Business Administration), Bill Rife (Chemistry), Dave Schaffner (Agribusiness), and John Harrington, Chair (English).

Experience at other universities suggests that about 25 percent of those eligible will enroll in an Honors Program. The program would begin with approximately 50-60 students. Once the program is fully established, the graduates will number about 100 per year. Students would be admitted independently of their selection of a major at Cal Poly. Some students would enter the major in the traditional way as freshman, also entering the majors. Those undeclared majors who maintain the standards of the program and who have met lower-division requirements for a chosen major would be guaranteed admission to the major of their choice by the beginning of their junior year. During the advising process, all students would be strongly encouraged to declare a major by the end of their freshman year.

Catalogue Description

Cal Poly's undergraduate Honors Program combines special educational opportunities for talented students with a coherent General Education and Breadth option integrating lower-division course work and upper-division colloquia. Honors courses challenge and stimulate students to develop their intellectual abilities to the fullest. Students may enter the program as freshmen with declared majors or as undeclared majors with admission to the major of choice by the beginning the junior year.* Successful completion of the program will be noted on the student's transcript.

*Students seeking admission to majors with special portfolio admissions will need to follow regular procedures for those majors.

Publicity

A brochure fully describing the Honors Program will be prepared by the Director of Honors to inform prospective students of the various features of Honors at Cal Poly. Additional information about the Program will appear in the expected places such as the catalogue, advisory mailings, and the class schedule.

Program Requirements

The curriculum for entering freshmen and sophomores will emphasize integration of coursework for GE&B. During the junior and senior years various colloquia will encourage application of the fundamentals learned during lower-division coursework. Upon entering the program, students must take at least one Honors course or sequence in two of every three quarters during the freshman and sophomore years. Fifty or more quarter units of designated Honors coursework must be completed to earn an Honors diploma. Faculty from each college will cooperatively design courses, and courses linking technology to the liberal arts and sciences will be encouraged in formulating curriculum. Flexibility and innovation will be major premises in developing the program, including the possibility of traditional tutorial arrangements if appropriate.

Freshman and Sophomore Years

Cal Poly's current GE&B program requires 79 units of coursework, including 12-units at the upper-division level. Because the honors curriculum will emphasize writing, speaking, and critical thinking in small classes, students will receive one unit of additional Area A credit in each of the subject-matter courses of other area courses. Consequently, the 14 units of Area A may, in effect, be exempted from these students' GE&B requirements. All Honors courses will focus on subject matter and, where possible, courses will link various areas of knowledge. All courses are expected to be intellectually rigorous. Also, the program will encourage courses incorporating field trips (to museums, sites, or performances, for example), activities, and liaison with the community. All honors coursework will apply to designated GE&B requirements should students leave the program.

Junior and Senior Years

Students will earn at least 12 units of flexible upper-division GE&B colloquia credit during four or more separate quarters during the junior and senior years. Each colloquium will be designed to earn up to four units of credit, and each will focus on a theme or issue developed by participating faculty. Efforts will be made to link colloquia with ongoing series involving speakers, public performances, or other activities sponsored by various campus programs.

Implementation

The Honors Director, with consultation and approval of the Honors Council and the department chairs, will solicit ideas for new courses from the faculty. These new courses shall fulfill the goals of GE&B but will be given flexibility in achieving these goals. Linked courses will particularly be encouraged to demonstrate the interconnectedness of knowledge. Some sample suggestions from the committee: The Nature and Implications of Darwinism (taught by faculty from the humanities, the sciences, and the social sciences); A Comparison of the Uses of Language in the Humanities, in the Sciences, and in the Technological Disciplines (taught by faculty from the respective areas); Great Traditions of the World (studying the art, music, literature science, and technology from a specific time period).

Proposals for Honors courses will be approved by the Honors Council. A special liaison with the Senate Curriculum and GE&B Committee will be established to allow the flexibility and timeliness needed to develop and implement honors curriculum and establishing procedures for a biannual review.

Honors courses will usually be limited to 18 students. Each Honors course will have an Honors designation (listed in the course catalogue), and course descriptions will indicate which areas of GE&B each course fulfills. Extensive writing will be expected in all courses, and major papers for each course will be kept in the student's file in the Honors office.

With the concurrence of their department chairs, Honors students may elect to complete an Honors Thesis in lieu of a Senior Project. Such projects may involve joint supervision of departmental and honors faculty.

Eligibility

Admission

To be eligible for the program, a student must meet at least two of the following criteria:

- a. SAT (combined Math & Verbal) of 1200 or higher.
- b. Upper 10 percent of high school graduating class.
- c. 3.5 grade point average at Cal Poly for at least 15 units of coursework.
- d. Two or more Advance Placement scores of 4 or 5.
- e. Permission of the Director of the Honors Program.

However, an application from any student will be considered in terms of its individual merit. Any student interested in joining the program may submit other supporting evidence, such as recommendations from previous instructors or documentation that shows the ability to work independently at complex intellectual tasks.

Maintaining Eligibility

Students will be expected to achieve a GPA of 3.0 during their freshman year and to earn a cumulative GPA of 3.3 or higher to graduate with Honors. Participants will be reviewed annually to ascertain that their academic work shows satisfactory quality and progress. After talking with students deemed deficient, the Director will make retention recommendations to the Honors Council. Students disqualified from the program may petition for readmittance when they meet appropriate criteria.

Transcript Notations

Honors students will have "Honors Program" noted on their transcripts. Graduation from the program will be noted on the student's diploma. (Currently, graduates earning honors for academic excellence have the following notations on their diploma: Summa cum laude (3.85 gpa); Magna cum laude (3.70 gpa); and Cum laude (3.50 gpa). Consequently, as in most universities distinguishing graduation in an Honors Program from graduation with academic distinction, we can maintain the distinction with the current language. A student may graduate Summa cum laude, with Honors.)

Honors Dormitory

An effort will be made to provide identified housing for the Honors Program. Freshmen Honors students would be invited to live in a designated dormitory complex in a space sequestered for the program. Following common practice for Honors dormitories, approximately 40% of the students living in the Honors dormitory would be students not participating in the Honors Program. Such an arrangement would enhance intellectual exchange and provide a sense of identity to Honors students. In addition, the space within the dormitory would allow speakers, and perhaps colloquia, in a familiar and comfortable setting.

Program Administrator

Program Director

The Director of the Honors Program will oversee the program and will be the principal advisor for Honors students with undeclared majors. Based upon a recommendation forwarded by the Honors Council, the Vice President for Academic Affairs will appoint the Director to a three-year renewable term. The Director will report to the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Honors Council

The Honors Council will provide oversight and will be the source of university policy governing the program. The Council will consist of the Director of the Honors Program (ex officio), one faculty member from each College (serving three-year, staggered terms) including one representative from the Curriculum Committee and one from the GE&B Committee, three Honors students (serving one year, renewable terms), representatives from SAS, from Admissions, from Academic Records (all three ex officio), and from the Vice President for Academic Affairs (usually the Associate Vice President). Based upon recommendations from the Faculty Senate, faculty members will be appointed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs in consultation with the Honors Director. Students members will be elected by Honors Students.

The Honors Council will approve Honors courses and colloquia, evaluate the program periodically, and advise on matters important to the program.

Honors Faculty

Honors Faculty will be selected jointly by the Director of Honors and the chairperson of the department offering appropriate courses. Faculty will be selected on the basis of their ability to work collectively with faculty in other disciplines, to foster intellectual growth, and to work individually with students. Faculty will be provided with a supportive environment for working with students and will be encouraged to involve themselves at various stages of the development of students. The Honors Faculty will develop curriculum and propose colloquia. Participation in Honors should be viewed as a positive factor in RPT decisions.

State of California
Memorandum

To: Jack D. Wilson, Chair
Academic Senate

Date: 03/31/95

From: Warren J. Baker
President

Copies: R. Koob

Subject: Academic Senate Resolution 434-95 Resolution on a Proposal for a University Honors Program

I was pleased to receive the Academic Senate's Resolution on a Proposal for a University Honors Program and will by copy of this memo ask Vice President Koob to oversee its implementation.

This new program promises to encourage the enrollment and retention of diverse, highly motivated students. They will find in it an opportunity to explore a variety of modes of learning and to gain an appreciation for the interconnectedness of knowledge in learning contexts crafted carefully to promote creativity and intellectual rigor. As a seedbed for innovation in teaching and learning the program promises to enrich the entire university. I would like to congratulate the faculty for its development. It is yet another example of the faculty's commitment to our students and to the tradition of quality undergraduate instruction at Cal Poly.